

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 ACDA-19 DRC-01 EUR-25 /170 W

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R 211217Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1233

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0330

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: KNESSET DEBATE ON DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT

1. AFTER FORMAL OPENING EIGHTH KNESSET TODAY, AT WHICH MRS MEIR WILL PRESIDE AS OLDEST PARLIAMENTATIAN AT SWEARING-IN CEREMONY AND ELECTION OF NEW SPEAKER, KNESSET WILL HOLD DEBATE ON DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT JANUARY 22.

2. PRECLUDE TO DEBATE HAS BEEN SERIES OF RADIO AND TV APPEARANCES OVER WEEKEND BY ALLON AND DAYAN TO EXPLAIN TO ISRAELI PUBLIC WHAT ARWJT THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL BENEFITS OF DISENGAGEMENT FOR ISRAEL. LIKUD LEADER BEGIN AND ARIK SHARON, WHO GAVE UP HIS ARMY COMMAND JAN 20 TO START HIS POLITICAL CAREER AS NEW KNESSET MEMBER TODAY, CONTINUED THEIR SHARP ATTACK ON TERMS OF AGREEMENT ALONG LINES OUTLINED TEL AVIV 284 AND 301. SHARON HELD PRESS CONF, AND LIKUD ORGANIZED RALLY YESTERDAY EVENING IN FRONT OF TEL AVIV
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CITY HALL WHICH OUR BEST ISRAELI SOURCES ESTIMATE AT ABOUT

1000-1500 ATTENDED. STORMY WEATHER PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO KEEPING ATTENDANCE DOWN.

3. DEPRIMIN ALLON DESCRIBED THE FOLLOWING LIKELY SCENARIO FOR THE KNESSET DEBATE DURING OUR CONVERSATION LAST NIGHT: A) MRS MEIR WILL MAKE THE GOVT STATEMENT, AND PROBABLY ALSO SUM UP AT END OF DEBATE, AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT NRP AND INDEPENDENT LIBERAL MINISTERS ALSO WILL SPEAK ON BEHALF OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. B) DEBATE WILL LAST SIX-EIGHT HOURS. IF ALL KNESSET MEMBERS PRESENT, DEBATE WOULD BE CONCLUDED WITH PROBABLY 81-39 VOTE ENDORSING AGREEMENT, ONLY LIKUD VOTING AGAINST. GOVT EXPECTS, HOWEVER, THAT FOR VARIOUS REASONS TEN PRO-DISENGAGEMENT KNESSET MEMBERS MAY BE ABSENT. (NOTE: THIS SEEMS HIGH, PARTICULARLY ON SECOND DAY OF NEW KNESSET, BUT SHOULD NOT PREVENT PASSAGE OF AGREEMENT BY COMFORTABLE MAJORITY.) C) ALIGNMENT WILL FOLLOW UP DEBATE WITH MAJOR INFO CAMPAIGN THROUGHOUT ISRAEL.

4. BEGIN'S COMPLAIN THAT GOI SHOULD NOT HAVE SIGNED DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT UNTIL AFTER PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE AND VOTE HAS FOUND SOME SUPPORT AMONG PRO-DISENGAGEMENT KNESSET MEMBERS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE TOLD THAT A NUMBER OF THESE MEMBERS EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN ON THIS SCORE TO DAYAN IN COURSE OF HIS BRIEFING OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE. SINCE THESE OBJECTIONS WERE NOT DIRECTED TO SUBSTANCE OF AGREEMENT BUT TO PROCEDURE BY WHICH IT WAS ADOPTED, GOVT EXPECTS THESE MKS WILL NONETHELESS VOTE FOR AGREEMENT TOMORROW, HOWEVER, SUBJECT OF PROCEDURE HAS BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, AN ISRAELI JURIST COMMENTED ON ISRAELI TV ON JAN 19, THAT, UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WAS VALID UPON SIGNATURE AND THAT KNESSET VOTE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WAS STRICTLY PRO-FORMA.

5. COMMENT: KNESSET SESSIONS WILL BE MRS MEIR'S FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE OUTSIDE HER HOUSE SINCE HER ILLNESS, AS WELL AS HER FIRST EXTENDED STATEMENT ON THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. DURING MY MEETING WITH HER JAN 19 SHE CONFIRMED HER INTENTION TO BE PRESENT THROUGHOUT ALL CONFIDENTIAL

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OF TOMORROW'S DEBATE. IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE HAS RECOVERED FROM HER ILLNESS AND THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT HAS ALSO GIVEN HER A POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT ON WHICH TO BASE HER POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT A DAHAF POLL LAST WEEK SHOWED 62 PERCENT OF ISRAELIS FAVORED THE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. ASSUMING DEMONSTRATED EGYPTIANS GOOD FAITH IN CARRYING OUT TERMS OF AGREEMENT, WE ASSUME THAT SUPPORT WILL INCREASE AS INFO

CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS RESERVITS START
TO RETURN HOME.
KEATING

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